

2006 Session
Report to the
16th Legislative
District

Representative
BILL GRANT
Majority Caucus Chair



Dear Neighbors,

Well, the 2006 Legislative session has come to an end, and I'm happy to be back home on the farm. I am also happy to report that the session was remarkably successful for those of us from the east side of the Cascades.

From immediate relief from the sales tax on farm-use diesel to long-term strategic investments in crop-based biofuels to a deal on Columbia River management, we found innovative solutions to the rough roads faced by our farmers and ranchers.

We took steps to remove barriers for small businesses by removing tax penalties, offering an affordable health care plan, and establishing help for small manufacturers to compete in the global marketplace.

And we found ways to help our kids succeed by providing schools additional tools to prepare students for the WASL, and expanding college opportunities in the Tri-Cities.

All in all, I am very proud of what we accomplished this year. Thank you for the honor of representing you.

Sincerely,

Bill

Representative
BILL GRANT

2006 SESSION REPORT

Historic Breakthroughs

The 2006 Legislative session has been called "The Session of Breakthroughs" by many in the press. I prime-sponsored two of these bills—one that brought resolution to a decades-long dispute, and one that will help change the way we power our state:

► **Columbia River Management**

Decades of haggling came to an end with an historic compromise that will preserve the Columbia River's water for farmers, commerce, and fish. It includes funds for water storage, innovative agreements between water users and the state to protect valuable habitat for fish while allowing more efficient and balanced farm usage. The state will invest \$200 million in water storage and conservation to make the plan work. It requires one-third of the water to stay in streams for fish and allows two-thirds of water to be used for irrigation or drinking water.

► **Energy Freedom**

Washington is primed to lead the nation in the alternative-fuels industry, creating opportunities for farmers, jobs for workers, and a clean, domestic fuel supply for our state. Biodiesel can be made from crops such as soy beans and canola, and ethanol can be made from wheat and corn. I sponsored a grant and loan program to help farmers and manufacturers get in on the ground floor of this growing industry. While we may never totally get away from using imported oil, I would sure rather see our fuel dollars go to our local companies.

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Representative
BILL GRANT

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HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 2006 SESSION

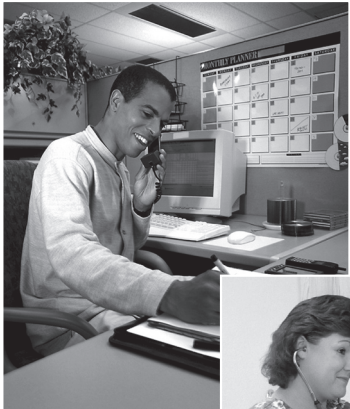


RailEx Produce Train— I worked to secure \$3.5 million to finish the RailEx project at the Port of Walla Walla. Directed by the port, a new Wallula distribution center will allow Washington farmers to get their products to the East Coast markets in less than six days. The private-public partnership will open up a huge new venue for our agriculture industry.

Supporting our farmers

Agriculture is still Washington's leading industry, but farmers are facing unprecedented challenges these days. The increasing costs of farming, from diesel for trucks and tractors to the price of fertilizer, are taking their toll on farmers in Washington State. To support family farms, I sponsored measures to:

- Eliminate the sales tax on diesel used for agriculture. This bill was signed by the governor and is already in effect. To print the form to use the exemption, go to <http://dor.wa.gov/Docs/forms/ExcsTx/ExmptFrm/FarmersRetailSlsTxExmptCert.pdf>
- Exempt replacement parts for farm machinery from sales and use taxes.
- Recognize that a majority of farmers earn money from non-farm work and give some flexibility to local governments on growth management decisions for farms.



Supporting our small businesses

There are nearly 530,000 small businesses in Washington – the fastest growing segment of our economy. While our state is rated fourth friendliest in the nation for new businesses by the Small Business & Entrepreneurship Council, we know more improvements can be made. With that in mind, we:

- Rolled back the state tax reporting date and removed penalties, saving small businesses time and money.
- Offered an innovative, voluntary partnership that blends employer and employee dollars with state assistance to make good health coverage affordable for employers and employees. The size of the subsidy would depend on the employee's income. This is a new choice for businesses, not a mandate. And there is no business red tape or paperwork, since the employee makes the application.
- Established the Washington Manufacturing Services to help small manufacturers compete in the tough global marketplace, creating and retaining jobs.



Supporting our kids

A good education remains the surest road to success for our children. We invested in quality education at all levels, taking steps to provide the tools needed to assure every student has the chance to succeed.

- For the first time, the class of 2008 must pass the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) in order to get their high school diplomas. We gave schools new funding to provide extra help to 10th graders who are struggling to pass the WASL, and established alternate ways to graduate for students who fail the WASL twice.
- High school graduates on our corner of Washington have had few opportunities to get a four-year college degree at a school close to home. That will soon change – WSU will be bringing a bachelor-of-arts program to its Tri-Cities branch.

Many of you have contacted my office about sex offenders. I want to assure you that nothing is more important to me than protecting our children from predators. We passed the toughest sex offender legislation in the country, insisting on 25 years-to-life sentences, around-the-clock monitoring, and tough penalties for failing to register with local law enforcement departments.

